

# EDITORIAL

## Fellowship in the Book of Galatians (1)

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Several years ago, I wrote an article on "Fellowship and First Corinthians" (*Truth Magazine*, Vol. XIX, No. 14, p. 8) in which I presented the teaching of that book pertaining to the subject of fellowship. I thought that the material was relevant to the discussion of the issues of the day. As somewhat of a sequel to that article so far as style is concerned, I would like to consider the teaching of the book of Galatians as to the subject of fellowship. I have sought to use the material in this book in such a manner as to relate it to our problems today.

The churches of Galatia were troubled by men who were coming among them disturbing them. The peace and harmony which normally characterized the local church were broken by these brethren. Consequently, Paul had to write instructions explaining how these false men needed to be handled in order that whole churches would not be led away from the teachings of Christ.

### The Nature of the Apostasy

In order to understand the subject of fellowship in Galatians and to relate it to modern problems, we need first to know what the apostasy in the churches of Galatia was like. The book speaks of those who were minded to revert to the Law of Moses as a means of justification. However, there was not a total break with Christianity; instead, they wanted to keep the best of both systems. The Judaizers did not deny the virgin birth, the atoning death of Jesus Christ, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, His present position as Lord of lords and King of kings, or baptism. By present day definitions among the "grace-fellowship" brethren, they believed the "gospel." Rather, the Judaizers tried to compel their Gentile brethren to be circumcised, observe the Jewish holy days, and otherwise to keep the law. Their apostasy pertained to "doctrine."

One of their reasons for wanting to bind these Mosaical laws upon their Gentile brethren was to avoid persecution. The Jews were persecuting their brethren who became Christians because they abandoned observance of the Mosaical law. Paul wrote, "But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also" (4:29). Later, he asked, "But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been

abolished" (5:11). As he concluded his letter he stated the motive of the Judaizers; he said, "Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may boast in your flesh" (6:12). By persuading the Gentiles to be circumcised, the Judaizers could avoid persecution from their Jewish brethren; they could brag about how many Gentiles they had proselyted.

The book of Galatians shows that the two systems of salvation through observance of the Mosaical law and the obedience of faith to the Law of Christ are incompatible. One cannot mix the two. The man who tries to go back to the Mosaical law to receive circumcision falls from grace, severs his relationship with Christ, and is a debtor to observe the entire law of Moses (5:1-4).

From these comments, we see that the apostasy that was going on in Galatia was from within the church. By today's terminology among the "grace-fellowship" brethren, it was a "doctrinal" apostasy. With this in mind, it is interesting to notice some of the passages which speak about fellowship found in the little book to the Galatians. How did Paul treat the subject of fellowship with those who reverted to the law of Moses? Did he say, "We may as well expect everyone to like the same kinds of food as to expect everyone to agree on doctrinal matters in the church"? Did he believe in a unity-in-diversity of the sort which is advocated by Carl Ketherside and Leroy Garrett with reference to this "doctrinal" matter? Let us consider several of the important passages in this book with this in mind.

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

### Gal. 1:6-9

1. The apostasy led by the Judaizers perverted the gospel of Christ. Notice the several things which Paul said of the Judaizers. They were following a different gospel; they distorted the gospel of Christ; the gospel which they preached was not really a gospel at all; the gospel which they preached was contrary to that which the apostles preached to them. Hence, this doctrinal error destroyed the very heart of the saving gospel, although it neither denied any of the seven facts or denied the one act (baptism) which brought men into fellowship with God's Son.

2. The doctrinal apostasy damned one's soul. The man who preached this doctrine was accursed. Brethren, I have read several different descriptions of what awaits the saints in heaven, but this is not one of them. The men involved in this doctrinal apostasy were destined to hell! They were not pleasing to God and, therefore, stood condemned before Him. We shall see later in this article that not only were the ones who taught this heresy condemned but also they who followed it.

3. The Judaizers were disturbing the churches. They

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## THIS WEEK'S COVER

This week's cover features a picture of the building where the saints in Wilmington, North Carolina worship. Read the history, present work of the congregation and schedule of its services on Page 5 of this issue.

went everywhere to teach their apostasy of binding the law of Moses upon Gentile Christians. Everywhere they went, churches were disturbed. Even as the church in Antioch was disturbed by these brethren, so were the churches in Galatia.

## Gal. 2:1-10: Paul's Trip To Jerusalem

Space will not permit me to reproduce this long passage, but open your biblical text to that place and notice the points which we observe from it. Paul went to Jerusalem as a result of a direct revelation from God (2:2). While there, certain Jewish brethren attempted to compel Titus who accompanied him to be circumcised. Paul described these brethren as "false brethren" (2:4). To these brethren, Paul refused to yield by way of subjection for even such a short period of time as one hour (2:5).

(In light of the fact that Paul circumcised Timothy to avert Jewish prejudice (Acts 16:3), his refusal to circumcise Titus becomes even more significant. The former was done because Timothy was a Jew who would be working among Jews; the latter was not done because such would have been tantamount to accepting the Judaizer's legislation that Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be saved. Inasmuch as this would have been to compromise the gospel, to bind where God had loosed, Paul refused to allow Titus to be circumcised.)

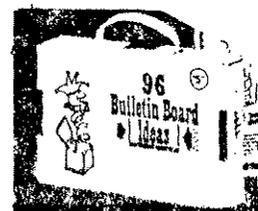
Consequently, Paul presented the gospel which he preached to "those who were of reputation" in private. When they saw that he was preaching the revelation of God through Jesus Christ, they gave to Paul and Barnabas "the right hand of fellowship" (2:9). This right hand of fellowship would not have been extended to the Judaizers nor would it have been extended to Paul and Barnabas had they been preaching a gospel contrary to the revelation of Jesus Christ. Hence, the apostles and elders in Jerusalem somehow concluded that they must have doctrinal agreement before the right hand of fellowship could be extended to these men.

Those who preach "unity-in-diversity" would have extended the right hand of fellowship to the Judaizers as well. They would have told us that it would be ridiculous to expect all brethren to understand this matter alike. Not so, the first century apostles! They believed that all brethren had to accept and believe the same thing about this. They did not write about poor, ignorant brethren with imbecility of intellect who could not understand these matters.

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# EDITORIAL

## Gal. 2:11-14: Peter's Apostasy in Antioch

Mike Willis

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But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy. But when I was there they were not straight-forward about the truth of the Gospel, I said to CEPHAS IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Peter's apostasy was a weakness of the flesh. When the Jews from Jerusalem came to Antioch, he was afraid (2:12) of what their reaction might be when they saw him eating with Gentiles in violation of the law of Moses. Consequently, he withdrew from them and stood aloof. The rest of the Jews in the congregation at Antioch followed his lead, including Barnabas, Paul's devoted companion.

Many of my brethren are telling me that sins which come as a result of weakness of the flesh are automatically covered by God's grace. They write that the perfect obedience of Christ is imputed to the believer so that sins pertaining to weaknesses of the flesh are automatically forgiven by God. Yet, Paul said, "he stood condemned" (2:11). Now, who am I to believe, my brethren who say that the perfect obedience of Christ is imputed to the believer to cover such sins which come as a weakness of the flesh, or the apostle Paul who said that Peter was condemned? I choose Paul, what about you?

We observe also Paul's method of handling this disagreement. Instead of just "lovingly overlooking these differences," Paul withstood Peter, as the ringleader of the apostasy, to his face. He publicly rebuked him in the presence of all. Who can believe that Peter's apostasy was of such a nature that he was denying the seven facts of the gospel or the one act that brought one into fellowship with God. If the gospel-doctrine distinction were true, this apostasy was a doctrinal apostasy. Yet, Paul could not extend fellowship to the man who was apostasizing; instead, he publicly rebuked him. I would that some of my "grace-unity" brethren would take a lesson from this and spend a little of their time rebuking to the face in the presence of all those brethren who are preaching that instrumental music in worship violates no scriptural principles, that sponsoring church or-

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ganization is not organizational apostasy, that sending funds from the church treasury to support benevolent homes and colleges is not a violation of the scriptures, and that church involvement in recreation is not a violation of the mission of the church. Instead, they mingle with those who pervert the gospel of Jesus Christ without ever rebuking them of their sins.

Gal. 4:11

I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

This passage appears in the context of the Galatians observing days, months and years. By reverting to the observance of these Jewish feast days, the Galatians were recognizing the Mosaical law as binding on them. Consequently, Paul considered their observing of these days as a sign of their belief that the Old Law was still binding on them. To go back to the Old Law and keep its commandments would make Paul's labor be *in vain*. Why would his labor be in vain? The reason seems obvious; it would be void of result. He had labored to save the Galatians; if they reverted to observing the Mosaical law, they would be lost and his labor would be worthless, so far as productive fruit was concerned. Hence, this passage is further proof that one could lose his soul through returning to observe the Mosaical law. Doctrinal apostasizes about matters other than the seven facts and the one act are damning.

Gal. 5:2-4

Behold, I Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

This doctrinal apostasy broke one's relationship with Christ and, consequently, with the disciples of Christ. Those who taught and accepted the doctrine that one had to be circumcised in order to be saved were severed from Christ and fallen from grace; Christ was of no benefit to them. Furthermore, they were morally obligated to obey the entire Mosaical law for the same reason that they felt compelled to obey the ordinance pertaining to circumcision.

Gal. 5:9-10

A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.

The danger of this doctrine spreading throughout the Lord's church concerned Paul. He knew that it had to be stopped. Consequently, he expressed the confidence in the Galatians that they would follow his commandments as expressed in this epistle and adopt no other view. Indeed, it is a shame that Paul had not been liberated from the legalism of the Law! Poor soul, he had not yet learned that there are a multitude of views. He did not know that the Lord's church is divided over thirty-seven thousand different things and that, therefore, we cannot expect everyone to understand the Bible alike. He was naive, so naive that he expected

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## THIS WEEK'S COVER

This week's cover features the beautiful Fern Grotto. Visitors to the island of Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands arrive at this lovely Fern Grotto after a short boat trip up the Waialua River. Photo courtesy of Hawaii Visitors Bureau.

everyone to have the same view of the matter! Pardon my sarcasm, but when I compare what the apostle of inspiration said with what the apostles of the grace-fellowship faction are saying, I get rather upset. These men are denying the gospel which saves us.

Paul again indicated the damning influence of this heresy which existed among the brethren in the churches of Galatia. He said, "the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is." Like the passage in 1:6-9 and 2:11, this passage indicates that this doctrinal apostasy would damn one's soul. Even if the gospel-doctrine distinction were true, one would still be obligated to prove that deniers of doctrines revealed in God's holy word can be received in the fellowship of the saints. Passages such as the one which we are studying certainly would negate the premise. Paul expected everyone to adopt the same view; those who did not would bear his judgment.

## Gal. 6:1

Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness; looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.

As I read the literature that is circulating among us, I see articles written which imply that the man who sins through ignorance or through the weakness of his flesh will not be held accountable for these sins. To these people, the grace of God is somehow automatically extended to forgive these men, whether through the imputation of the perfect obedience of Christ to the believer's account or through some other theological manipulation. Yet, this passage shows that the man who is "overtaken" (AV) in a fault is guilty of sin, separated from God and in need of restoration. "The point of the *prolempithe* is that Paul has in view a fault into which the brother is betrayed 'unaware,' so that it is not intentionally wrong" (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. IV, p. 14). This sin committed in ignorance was not automatically covered by the grace of God. Though it occurred "unawares," the man was still guilty before God and in need of restoration. A saved man does not need to be restored. The man who is separated from God is the man in need of restoration. Hence, this passage shows that those who are unintentionally guilty of transgressing God's holy commandment stand guilty before God and in need of salvation.

## Conclusion

Those among us who are willing to extend the right hand of fellowship to false brethren among us, need to learn the lessons pertaining to fellowship found in the book of Galatians. Apparently, those who extend the right hand of fellowship to those who are using instrumental music in worship, supporting from the church treasury missionary societies, distorting the government of the local church through the sponsoring church arrangement, perverting the mission of the church through involvement in church support of recreation, education, and benevolence of non-Christians, etc. do not view these men as false teachers. If one reads their writing, he will soon see that this is the case. They

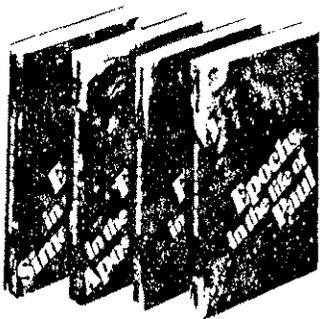
engage in no exposure of these sins; rather, the only sin that they seem interested in exposing is the "sin" of exposing false teachers!

The situation in these papers resembles to a greater degree than I like to admit what I see going on in America. In America, Anita Bryant is castigated for condemning the sinful homosexual. In the church, the man who exposes these false teachers for what they are is the can condemned. A man can call for church involvement in any activity he may desire with impunity in the eyes of the majority of the brethren, but let him expose one of these false brethren who are involving the church in sinful activities, and he becomes a "trouble-maker."

My brethren, we need to go back to the Bible to let it be our guide in matters pertaining to whom we will fellowship and how much false doctrine can be tolerated. When we decide to conform ourselves to the Scriptures, we will not be arguing among ourselves over whether or not those who pervert the work and worship of the church can remain in the fellowship of the saints.

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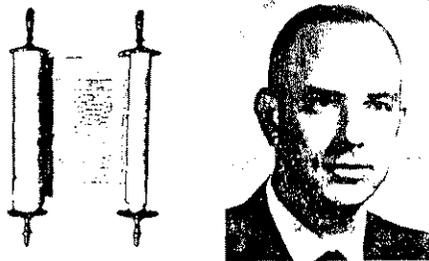
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## The Revised Standard Version

This version, a purported revision of the *American Standard Version* of 1901, has served as a vehicle for modernism since its publication. Its appearance in 1947 was the result of an effort on the part of liberals, especially the liberal National Council of Churches. Its translators were extremely modernistic, denying the inspiration of the Bible and the deity of Jesus Christ.

One of the major faults of this version is its omission of italics whenever words have been supplied by the translators, thus giving no indication of where the sacred text spoke or where the translators spoke.

Another of its major faults is its attack on the miraculous conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit by means of its faulty rendering of "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14 as "young woman" and its change of Mary's "I know not a man" in Luke 1:34 to "I have no husband." Another area of the modernistic attack is the deity of Jesus, His being the only begotten Son of God: In John 3:16 and in five other verses the expression "only begotten" is mishandled in such a way as to cast doubt on the deity of Christ and to verify the deliberate attempts of the unbelievers on the translating committee. The *New English Bible*, the British counterpart in the liberal movement of the *Revised Standard Version* in the United States, does the same damage in the areas of Jesus' miraculous conception and His being the only begotten Son of God. That pernicious paperback perversion, *Good News for Modern Man*, does the same thing to Jesus' deity.

This RSV also butchered Jesus' avowed relationship to the Law and the prophets in Matthew 5:17 by having him say that he came not to *abolish*, but to fulfill. To the contrary, He did come to abolish it according to God's eternal purpose and to enact a better covenant to take its place. Paul even said that the Old Law had been abolished by Jesus' death on the cross (Eph. 2:15). Yes, the same version has Jesus doing exactly what they have Him saying He did not come to do! The point of Matthew 5:17 is not the abolishment of the Law, but Jesus' attitude and action toward it. He meant that he did not come to destroy it, to run roughshod over it and to disregard it, but rather to respect it, to observe it,